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**Global programmes, inclusion and resilience**

*Summary*

This paper provides an overview of developments in UNHCR's global programmes since the last update to the Committee in March 2021 (EC/73/SC/CRP.3), in particular in the context of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It focuses on interventions and implementation in key areas such as: livelihood opportunities and economic inclusion; cash assistance; education; public health (including nutrition, and mental health and psychosocial support); food security; as well as shelter, energy and environment, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. Two years into the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, UNHCR has continued to deliver its global programmes despite the uncertain context. These programmes covered the following areas: livelihoods and economic inclusion; education; food security; cash-based interventions; public health (including nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support); water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); shelter and settlements; and energy and environment. UNHCR also co-leads the global shelter cluster and the global camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) cluster. While the far-reaching negative impacts of COVID-19 are still felt by persons of concern to UNHCR and continue to exacerbate existing humanitarian challenges, global programmes contributed to mitigating some of the pandemic's worst consequences, both for persons of concern and host communities.

2. This paper provides an update on the progress achieved in 2021 to support refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), stateless persons and returnees better, in line with the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). The paper also highlights how UNHCR's global programmes strengthen the self-reliance and inclusion of persons of concern in national services.

## **II. Updates on technical sectors**

### **A. Livelihood and economic inclusion**

3. Improving the livelihoods of displaced populations at local, regional and global levels is a priority for UNHCR. In 2021, UNHCR and partners provided assistance to refugee households that were particularly impacted by COVID-19. Prioritized interventions included support to protect productive assets and inputs, as well as grants for business creation and recovery. Through the Poverty Alleviation Coalition, poverty reduction programmes were supported and access to employment, entrepreneurship, and agricultural activities was facilitated. The Office continued building partnerships to promote development-oriented and evidence-based livelihood programming, while advocating for the economic inclusion of the forcibly displaced in government economic relief plans and social services.

4. With the aim of advancing economic inclusion, UNHCR worked with financial service providers, promoting greater support for refugees in the current challenging context. The Office strengthened its partnership with the non-profit organization Kiva, which has provided risk-tolerant funding to over 27,000 refugees since 2016 through 20 local partners, with a loan repayment rate of 95.5 per cent. [MADE51](#), UNHCR's flagship initiative which connects refugee-made products with markets, was expanded to 23 countries, engaging 30 local social enterprises to create employment for over 3,000 refugee artisans. The Poverty Alleviation Coalition is active in 20 countries and, in collaboration with 13 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is supporting over 60,000 refugee and host community households to become self-reliant.

5. Inclusion in national systems is a key strategy to address the needs of displaced populations in a more predictable manner and to promote their self-reliance. To this end, UNHCR worked with governments and development actors in fostering opportunities to include displaced populations in existing social protection programmes. For example, with funding from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA 18 and 19), 14 projects are enhancing access of refugees to social safety nets in low-income countries. Furthermore, additional funding has been channelled through the projects as part of the COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

### **B. Social protection**

6. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on displaced persons and the widespread use of social protection programmes as a government response increased the urgency for UNHCR to engage in social protection systems. In 2020 and 2021, UNHCR carried out four studies on inclusion in systems that covered the COVID-19 social protection responses; inclusion in social protection systems in Europe and Africa; and the World Bank IDA18

regional sub-window funded social protection projects. These studies have shown how transitioning from assistance to inclusion in government social protection systems contributes to protection and pathways to solutions, particularly for refugees in contexts of protracted displacement. They also demonstrated that an area-based approach to scaling up coverage for host and refugee populations and the adjustment of project design and rollout to meet the specific needs and harness the capacities of refugees are all important aspects to fostering inclusion.

7. Building on these studies, UNHCR has developed a “Roadmap for inclusion of persons of concern in social protection systems (2022-2025)”. Such efforts, will continue to help governments and development actors open windows of inclusion in existing policy and programmes, align assistance and support the access of persons of concern to these programmes. The roadmap also aims at guiding coherent action by all stakeholders through a government-led transition action plan. Throughout 2021, UNHCR has worked with the World Bank to provide support to governments in the design and rollout of IDA18 regional sub-window and IDA19 window for refugees and host communities social protection projects in Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mauritania and the Republic of the Congo. For example, UNHCR together with the Ministry for Social and Family Affairs and the World Bank in Mauritania supported the enrolment of 14,000 refugee households to the national social registry, 6,000 households for social assistance cash transfers, while targeting 4,500 vulnerable households for a COVID-19 response through the Asian Development Bank. These efforts reached the majority of the refugee population in the country.

### C. Cash-based interventions

8. Throughout 2021, UNHCR delivered some \$670 million in over 100 countries including in challenging emergencies involving countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Yemen. Cash remains an efficient tool to respond to immediate life-saving needs, as well as a key approach to fostering resilience and unlocking the potential for sustainable inclusion for persons of concern.

9. Over the course of the year, post-distribution monitoring using UNHCR’s corporate tool was conducted in 60 countries. The [global Post Distribution Monitoring report](#) concluded that cash assistance was effective in responding to people’s needs and helping to improve their overall well-being. Markets largely remained functional despite the global challenges posed by the pandemic, and cash was the preferred assistance modality. Some 95 per cent of the respondents reported that cash assistance had improved their living conditions and helped reduce feelings of stress.

10. In line with the Global Compact on Refugees, 6 million persons of concern benefitted from digital payments in 48 countries. Some 25 per cent had access to fully owned bank accounts or mobile money accounts, which is a pathway towards financial inclusion. Seventy per cent of UNHCR’s cash is delivered through CashAssist (UNHCR’s cash management system) enabling end-to-end accountability to affected populations and ensuring an efficient response.

11. UNHCR’s new Policy on Cash-Based Interventions 2021-2026 aims at achieving results for persons of concerns and identifying actions that are required to reach those. It has a focus on increasing cash in emergencies, cash to improve protection and cash that promotes inclusion and access to local services in a sustainable manner. UNHCR will also invest in efficient and inclusive coordination of cash-based interventions across operations.

### D. Education

12. The “Educate a Child” initiative has proved instrumental in facilitating access to education to out-of-school children at the primary school level in 15 operations<sup>1</sup> across Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East. The initiative also contributed to

<sup>1</sup> These comprise operations in Cameroon, Chad, Iraq, Kenya (in Dadaab and Kakuma), Malawi, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Uganda, Yemen.

strengthening UNHCR's COVID-19 education response and recovery efforts in these countries.

13. By the end of 2021, the global "Aiming higher" campaign had raised a total of \$7.8 million for tertiary education scholarships. Denmark and the Czech Republic joined Germany as State donors to the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) programme in 2021. UNHCR provided a leadership training series for 80 refugee youth, focusing on developing advocacy skills to achieve the "15by30" objective, which aims at enrolling 15 per cent of young refugees in higher education by 2030. A delegation of twelve refugee students and alumni attended the RewirED Summit at the World Expo 2020 in Dubai, delivering ten sessions highlighting innovative education initiatives and the importance of inclusive education for refugees.

14. The Accelerated Education Working Group leveraged UNHCR's expertise in accelerated learning initiatives, such as sharing detailed guidance to countries wishing to condense their curriculum in order to make up for teaching time lost during COVID. Guidance was provided in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for donors, implementers, and education systems with a view to helping learners catch up when schools re-open.

15. Building on lessons learned from school closures related to COVID-19, UNHCR worked to increase the digital inclusion of refugees through connected education initiatives, including through the launch of the [Refugee Connected Education Challenge](#). In addition, UNHCR worked with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to establish shared digital learning principles to encourage greater coherence and meaningful inclusion across education programmes of partners. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, Mozambique and Rwanda digital learning was expanded in local schools that hosted refugees.

#### **E. Food security**

16. In 2021, UNHCR increased its engagement in inter-agency coordination efforts on global nutrition and food security and participated in [the United Nations Food Systems Summit](#) at the United Nations General Assembly. At the national level, the Office advocated for the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations in country action plans to address child wasting.

17. To improve food security and protection for refugees, UNHCR expanded its operational collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) at country and global levels, including through the Joint Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub. Based on country requests, the hub provided technical and programmatic support in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jordan, Mauritania, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia to assess needs and vulnerabilities; design protection-sensitive strategies for targeting and prioritizing assistance to meet food and other basic needs; and develop joint plans for greater refugee self-reliance. However, persistent gaps in funding for food and other basic assistance remained a key challenge, significantly affecting the ability of refugees to meet their basic needs and increasing protection risks.

#### **F. Public health (including nutrition, mental health and psychosocial support)**

18. In 2021, the response to the pandemic continued to demand considerable attention and focused on prevention through the delivery of personal protective equipment, risk communication and community engagement, as well as improving access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, including oxygen therapy. UNHCR supported the strengthening of national health systems, including by establishing quarantine and treatment centres and increasing intensive care capacity. By the end of 2021, over 126,300 COVID-19 cases and nearly 2,400 deaths had been reported among refugees and other persons of concern since the onset of the pandemic.

19. UNHCR supported increased laboratory testing capacity and provided rapid diagnostic tests to scale up diagnostic capacity. By early 2022, operations had received nearly 650,000 tests. UNHCR continues to actively advocate for the inclusion of persons of concern in national COVID-19 vaccination plans. In 2021, 162 countries included refugees into their national COVID-19 vaccine plans. However, the speed of the vaccine roll-out is slow, due to

their unequal availability and an uneven implementation capacity at country level. By the end of 2021, 4.79 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been given to some 3.25 million refugees and other forcibly displaced people in 66 countries where UNHCR has data. An additional 72 countries confirmed to have started vaccinating persons of concern.

20. The pandemic highlighted the pivotal and cross-cutting nature of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for persons of concern to UNHCR. The organization is intensifying its efforts on MHPSS across all aspects of its work, including in IDP settings. The capacity in this field of nearly 90 primary health care staff was strengthened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and Rwanda, using the World Health Organization (WHO)/UNHCR [mental health Global Action Plan](#) Humanitarian Intervention Guide .

21. Contributing to the global goal of ending AIDS by 2030, and in line with the [UNAIDS Global AIDS Strategy 2021-26](#), UNHCR supported HIV programmes in over 48 countries. As a cosponsor of the Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNHCR worked with partners at national, regional and global levels to scale up services for adolescents and improve health and protection services for people who sell or exchange sex. Tuberculosis programming and its linkages with HIV care were also strengthened. To enhance access to quality sexual and reproductive health, UNHCR partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in a “training of trainers” programme to improve staff capacity for programming, monitoring and evaluation, including in maternal and neonatal health. Twenty-three colleagues from 19 countries from both agencies were trained.

22. In 2021, UNHCR resumed implementation of the Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) in 14 countries with protocols adapted to COVID-19. Following the launch of the Global Action Plan on child wasting in 2020 with the aim of accelerating prevention, early detection and treatment, UNHCR worked alongside UNICEF, WFP, WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to support the development of costed country roadmap action plans. UNHCR ensured that refugees were included in roadmaps in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen.

#### **G. Shelter, energy and environment, and water, sanitation, and hygiene**

23. In many operations, COVID-19 further compounded the need for core assistance, such as adequate water supply, access to hygiene facilities, homes which enable people to safely isolate and access to energy, allowing for crucial activities including distance learning for children worldwide.

24. Together with the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, UNHCR launched the Geneva Technical Hub (GTH) with the aim of helping to reduce the environmental impact of humanitarian action. The GTH brings together Swiss academics and expert practitioners to tackle technical challenges and build capacity in the areas of disaster risk reduction, settlement planning, shelter and housing, WASH, energy, and environment. During a Hepatitis E outbreak in Sudan, the GTH helped address a challenging sanitation situation with a two-month mission where specific wastewater system designs were discussed and negotiated with local authorities and partners. In Kenya, the GTH installed energy meters to record the energy consumption of communal facilities, which is the first step to redesign and replace fossil-based systems with renewable energy. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, three potential settlements and two transit sites were designed by the GTH, contributing to the preparedness efforts in response to the situation in Afghanistan.

25. In line with its [Strategic framework for climate action](#), UNHCR launched the [Operational strategy for climate resilience and environmental sustainability 2022-2025](#), with a focus on mitigating environmental degradation in displacement settings and ensuring the sustainability of its responses. The strategy includes measures that aim to benefit both host communities and displaced populations in the short and long term. They contribute to easing tensions by reducing competition over scarce natural resources and mitigating the negative impact of climate change, hence providing conditions for more resilient lives and meaningful inclusion. An [overview of shelter and sustainability](#) in settlements across UNHCR operations was published in April 2021 with the aim of helping humanitarian actors and host

governments evaluate shelter solutions from a technical, cultural and environmental perspective.

26. Innovative financing mechanisms present an opportunity to improve support for displaced populations and host communities, while better bridging humanitarian and development responses. UNHCR has made significant progress in diversifying financing mechanisms available to operations to enable the implementation of climate resilient and environmentally sustainable responses. In 2021, two innovative funding mechanisms were launched, the refugee environmental protection (REP) fund and the Project Flow initiative.

27. The REP fund aims to address the lack of clean and safe cooking fuel and the resulting widespread deforestation. The search for cooking fuel often results in protection risks, especially for women and girls, tensions with the host population, and environmental degradation, such as soil erosion, landslides and desertification. To address this problem, the REP fund will be set up as a financing mechanism that invests in large-scale reforestation and clean cooking programmes for refugees and host communities, while registering these as verified carbon credits. The fund aims at serving more than one million refugees and their hosting communities with access to clean cooking, while around five million people will benefit from improved safety and protection. At scale, more than 70,000 livelihood opportunities will be created, while the yearly environmental gain will be equal to 2.5 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered, empowering refugees and host communities to contribute to the global climate solution.

28. Project Flow aims to transform the energy source of 100-160 water boreholes, which serve between 500,000 and 800,000 refugees, from diesel to solar power by 2030. In addition to strengthening WASH infrastructure for refugees and host communities, switching boreholes to solar power will cut an estimated 180,000 tons in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

## **H. Shelter cluster**

29. In 2021, UNHCR led 16 out of 31 shelter clusters and a total of 19 cluster or cluster-like mechanisms. During the year, the global shelter cluster obtained funding to continue the implementation of the 2018-2022 global shelter cluster strategy. The global shelter cluster is also working to mobilize collective efforts towards greener and climate smart humanitarian shelter and settlement responses. In order to improve the global shelter cluster information management capacity, the [information management and assessment toolkit](#) was developed to complement the [coordination toolkit](#). During June 2021, the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the [global shelter cluster projects](#) publication was launched. To provide support and guidance on how to prevent and response to gender-based violence (GBV) to the global cluster and country level clusters, a GBV Officer joined the team and also worked with the CCCM cluster. The capacity of the global shelter cluster was further strengthened through the inclusion of an advocacy focal point, a research focal point as well as a roving cluster coordinator and a roving information management officer.

## **I. Camp coordination and camp management cluster**

30. In 2021, two UNHCR-led clusters (in Burkina Faso and Ethiopia) and one working group (in Afghanistan) were activated. With this, CCCM clusters are currently active in 22 countries. Of those, UNHCR leads 13 clusters and four working groups in operations involving some 10 million IDPs.

31. Throughout the year, UNHCR's CCCM global team supported operations with 243 mission days to country clusters. CCCM staff in operations increased with 10 additional staff in seven countries. As part of its renewed step-up in the operational CCCM engagement, through the leadership of the global CCCM cluster, UNHCR prioritized efforts to define and design an "area-based approach", in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. Increasingly, UNHCR ensured that the CCCM work embraced an approach that involved working with IDPs to identify solutions. Data collected in the context of CCCM will be captured and contextualized to address the information needs of other clusters for an adequate humanitarian response in camps and camp-like settings.

32. During the 16 days of activism against GBV, the global CCCM cluster organized a campaign involving clusters at the national level. Over 100 participants from 31 countries attended the webinar on GBV risk mitigation in CCCM: best practices and new approaches.

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